

Emerging of Obama's Policy towards Africa – African Hopes vs. American Pragmatism

Abstract

Under George W. Bush's presidency America turned into 'an empire of fear' that focused mainly on terrorism issues. Generally, most of all the foreign undertakings made by Bush administration were criticized and condemned. Nonetheless, there was one sphere of relations where Bush's strategy was praised – the U.S.-Africa relations. Yet, it was during Bush's tenure when the U.S. expanded military engagement on the continent. However, the election of Barack Obama for the President of the United States in 2008 incited a new range of hopes for a change in U.S. policy toward Africa and contributed to a raise in African support for the U.S. leadership in the world. However, the first year of Obama's presidency showed that there will be rather continuity in U.S. policy towards Africa. Even though a change has appeared in the rhetoric, the main forms of American policy towards Africa, such as military engagement and development assistance have remained the same. Therefore, the evolving Obama's doctrine toward Africa has already been called 'tough love' or 'pragmatic progressivism.' This article is an attempt to outline the main assumptions of Obama's policy towards Africa, in comparison with George W. Bush's policy. The author presents Africans' reactions to American 'tough love' rhetoric and assessment of Obama's emerging policy towards Africa.

"The 21st century will be shaped by what happens not just in Rome or Moscow or Washington, but by what happens in Accra, as well."

President Barack Obama,
Accra, July 2009

George W. Bush's presidency was marked by the expansion of the U.S. military engagements abroad and disapproval of American foreign undertakings. The United States was mostly criticized for its terrorism-concentrated policy and 'if not with us, you are against us' attitude to other countries. However, there was one sphere of Bush's strategy that gained much appreciation – the improvement in U.S.-Africa relations, as most of the African states regarded American activity on the continent as positive. Yet, it was also during Bush's presidency when America expanded its military assistance and cooperation with the African states.

At the same time, Africa and especially countries from Sub-Saharan region experienced a renewal of their relations with the People's Republic of China and a widespread engagement of this eastern power on the continent. African countries began to direct their attention toward the eastern partner and gained a vast amount of benefits, such as infrastructure or military help, mostly not constrained by any conditions.

Therefore, the election of Barack Obama for the President of the United States, after his campaign of "Change" incited a great range of hopes and expectations among African people. They believed that there would become a new era in the U.S.-Africa relations. They expected a change in U.S. policy toward Africa and its problems, especially abandonment of further militarization of American actions. However, the first year of Obama's presidency showed that there will be rather continuity of Bush's strategy. Yet, some change has appeared in the rhetoric, as President Obama, the first American president with family roots in Africa, is not afraid to talk about Africans' own mistakes and demands of taking responsibility for their own future. Still, the main forms of American policy towards Africa, such as military engagement and development assistance, remain among the priorities of U.S. Africa policy. The evolving Obama's doctrine toward Africa, either called 'tough love' or 'pragmatic progressivism', seems to be a disappointment to African people, general African support for the U.S. leadership improved in 2009.

This article is an attempt to outline the main assumptions of Obama's policy towards Africa that can be inferred from his decisions so far. It is a summary of building the new American doctrine towards the African continent under the Obama administration. Also, the author presents a comparison with George W. Bush's policy towards Africa. The author analyses Africans' reactions to American 'tough love' rhetoric and their assessment of Obama's emerging policy towards Africa. The task is to answer the question how the Africans perceive Obama's policy toward Africa and his administration's activity on the continent and how Obama's Africa policy differs from Bush's policy. The other questions to be answered are: will the American pragmatic vision for Africa bring any realization of African hopes or will it rather further push Africa towards China and other emerging powers? Will Obama and his Administration manage to counterbalance the Chinese influence and regain Africa's attention?

U.S.-Africa relations during Bush's tenure

America's image in the world dramatically worsened during George W. Bush's presidency. After the war in Iraq in 2003, America started to be perceived as a state that overuses its prevailing position. This contributed to the vision of America as a country making military threats to other states and creating peril to world peace.

People in many countries started to think that the U.S. was not attentive enough to world's problems, instead being concentrated more on the war on terrorism and oil interests.¹

Generally, foreign policy of Bush's administration did not bring America praise, but rather critical commentaries. However, there was one place in the world where American actions were approved and Bush's policy together with lots of new initiatives will be well remembered – Africa. At the end of his tenure, President Bush was even called "the continent's best friend."² Todd Moss from the Center for Global Development claimed that "President Bush's Africa policy is the most distinguished foreign policy legacy of the administration."³

The American administration started to pay more attention to the African continent after the attacks of September 11, 2001. Africa became a place of special strategic interests due to many weak states that in U.S. view could develop into an area of possible economic disturbance and strategic menace.⁴ As stated in *The National Security Strategy* (2002) the U.S. priority at that time was to defeat terrorist organizations of global reach and eliminate threats from rogue states. In the same document, the United States assured that it was going to defend not only the U.S. citizens but also people from allied countries.⁵ As far as African continent is concerned, the Bush administration realized that the region is full of emerging threats and dangers, and it insisted that there should be a coalition of the willing and a cooperative security arrangements built under the U.S. guidance. Generally, the U.S. administration decided to concentrate on three areas: increased attention to the most influential countries in the region (South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, and Ethiopia), cooperation with European allies and international institutions for conflict mediation and peace operations on the continent, and strengthening Africa's sub-regional organizations in their efforts to states reforming.⁶

The crucial value of Africa for the U.S. security interests was highlighted also in the second *National Security Strategy of the USA*, issued by the Bush administration in 2006:

Africa holds growing geo-strategic importance and is a high priority for this Administration. It is a place of promise and opportunity, linked to the United States by history, culture, commerce, and strategic significance. Our goal is an African continent that knows liberty, peace, stability, and increasing prosperity. (...) The United States recognizes that

¹ Andrew Kohut, "America's image in the world: Findings from the Pew Global Attitudes Project," *Remarks to the U.S. House Committee on Foreign Affairs*, Pew Research Center, March 14, 2007, 2–6.

² Martin Plaut, "Has Bush been Africa's best friend?" *BBC News*, 16 January 2009, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/7831460.stm> (accessed 12 May 2010).

³ Ibid.

⁴ Peter J. Pham, *America in Africa. Securing U.S. interests and promoting a continent's development* (Virginia: Mid Valley Press, 2007).

⁵ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D. C., 2002), 5.

⁶ Ibid., 10–11.

our security depends on partnering with Africans to strengthen fragile states and bring ungoverned areas under the control of effective democracies.⁷

Considering all the years of Bush's presidency, it appears that there were two main angles of U.S. strategy in Africa: acquiring unlimited access to African markets, energy and other natural resources; and supporting military security for major communication channels.⁸ American engagement on the African continent was primarily justified as a prerequisite to counter terrorism and bring regional instability in the Sub-Saharan region. In reality, it was connected more with the U.S. demand of oil and China's increasing presence in Africa.⁹

Nevertheless, the eight years of Bush's presidency brought a change in U.S. policy towards this continent. It was noticeable that the U.S. interests were widened, especially in the areas of security, energy and health. The U.S. became more persuasive in dealing with the Sudan case by exerting stronger pressure on its government (in order to end the north-south civil war). Much attention from the U.S. side was directed to a raise in resource flows and introduction of new significant initiatives, such as the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR), the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) or the U.S. Africa Command (AFRICOM). To some extent, PEPFAR and MCC became symbols of American 'soft power' investment in Africa. However, the Bush era can also be seen as a period of U.S. declining influence on the continent. The reason is that Africa became a competitive marketplace and started looking for other partners from such countries as: China, India, Brazil, Russia or Malaysia. Moreover, U.S. bilateral relations with major allies in Africa – Angola, Nigeria and South Africa – deteriorated during that time.¹⁰

Among positive undertakings of Bush's administration, next to PEPFAR (\$18bn spent on fighting HIV/AIDS, mostly in Africa) and Sudan case (persuading the international community that the atrocities in Sudan were a genocide, as well as support for the north-south peace deal), there were also other initiatives that are regarded as successful and beneficial to the Africans. The U.S. advocated the idea to cancel \$34bn worth of debt for 27 African countries. At the same time, the U.S. aid to Africa has increased to \$5.7bn a year by 2007. And worth approval is also Bush's Malaria initiative which led to halving malaria in 15 African states. As for the diplomatic means and missions, the U.S. envoys were putting much effort into prevention of fighting between the government and dissidents in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. However, Bush's security initiatives on the African continent were not without setbacks. One of the mishaps was the U.S. support for Ethiopia's invasion of Somalia in order to

⁷ The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States* (Washington, D. C., 2006), 37.

⁸ Pierre Abramovici, "United States: the new scramble for Africa," *Le Monde Diplomatique*, July 7, 2004 (English version), <http://mondediplo.com/2004/07/07/usinafrica> (accessed January 21, 2007).

⁹ John Bellamy Foster, "A warning to Africa: The New U.S. imperial grand strategy," 2007, <http://www.globalresearch.ca/index.php?context=va&aid=4726> (accessed February 23, 2010).

¹⁰ Jennifer C. Cooke, J. Stephen Morrison, "A smarter U.S. Approach to Africa," in *U.S. Africa Policy beyond the Bush Years*, ed. Jennifer G. Cooke, J. Stephen Morrison (Washington D.C.: CSIS, 2009), 2–3.

fight Islamists in 2006. The outcome of the operations seems to have led to strengthening of Islamists' position. The other one was Bush's administration problem with establishing a base for the unified command of UD armed forces in Africa (AFRICOM), which was welcomed with unwillingness from the side of African states.¹¹

The election of Obama and African expectations

A personal change in the White House always brings a change not only in main policies and reconstruction of the most crucial foreign relations and national interests, but also some shifts in popular assessment of these activities. This happened after Barack Obama took over the office of President in the U.S.; America's image abroad improved much beyond expectations, especially in the countries of Sub-Saharan Africa. The survey from 2009, carried out by Gallup, shows a vast approval of American leadership among people in African countries. The research was done in 110 countries and areas and people were to answer the question: "Do you approve or disapprove of the job performance of the leadership of the United States?" The results demonstrated that most African countries approve American activities in the world. For example, the rate of approval was 94% approval in Ivory Coast and 93% in Kenya, 89% in Mali, Tanzania and Democratic Republic of the Congo, and 87% in South Africa and Senegal.¹²

The result of the 2008 presidential elections in the United States was not overwhelmingly unprecedented, but also inspirational and positively welcomed around the world. Barack Obama's bold campaign under the motivational slogan of "Change" incited worldwide belief in the possibility of altering the world affairs for the better and abandoning a terrorism-oriented American strategy. The victory of Obama became a breakthrough also for the Africans, as after the years of struggle for equal treatment the first Afro-American gained this most significant political post in the world. Obama's racial origin as to a certain degree very symbolic and contributed to a raise of hopes and assumptions of change both for the America and the world, but most expectedly for the African continent. A lot of people believed that under Obama's administration the relations between the U.S. and African countries would expand into closer cooperation and bring betterment of the Africans' lives. Unfortunately, the first year of Obama's presidency was nothing more than just the repetition of some general promises and statements concerning further development of the U.S. – Africa relations. At the same time, President Obama and his fellows delivered a clear message to the Africans and the rest of the world that America is not

¹¹ Plaut, "Has Bush been Africa's best friend?..."

¹² Cynthia English, Julie Ray, "Sub-Saharan Africa leads world in U.S.," Gallup Global Reports, May 25, 2010, <http://www.gallup.com/poll/134102/Sub-Saharan-Africa-Leads-World-Approval.aspx> (accessed May 3, 2010).

responsible for any current African problems and that only Africans themselves can introduce some real changes in political and economic position of African countries on the world arena. It should be said at this moment that great expectations were replaced by the reality of "tough love."

Africans expected a lot of fresh initiatives from President Obama. Their expectations were based not only on the fact that Obama spent over 20 years travelling and has knowledge on Africa, but also on his familiarity with poverty and instability that he could observe during his stay in Indonesia.¹³ Also, as a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Obama was involved in many initiatives concentrated on dealing with African problems, such as genocide in Darfur, political instability in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, post-war accountability in Liberia and stabilization insecurity in Somalia. As a candidate for the U.S. President, Obama was declaring three main aims of his Africa policy: acceleration of Africa's integration into the global economy, increase of peace and security in African states and tightened relationships with governments, institutions and civil society organizations that promote democracy, accountability and anti-poverty actions in Africa.¹⁴ The famous motto of 'change' was not realized after the election, because President Obama chose as his close advisors people who were connected with the previous way of conducting foreign policy. The primary examples of these top officials are pro-military Susan Rice and Lawrence Summers, who once expressed support for dumping of toxic waste in Third World countries.¹⁵

On the other hand, African states should not expect much from the administration of President Obama, as it has to confront domestic problems in the United States first. The foremost practical realities that President Obama needs to challenge are the poor condition of the U.S. economy, situation in Iraq and Afghanistan, deteriorating relations with Latin American countries, demand of alternative energy sources and the necessity of internal reforms.¹⁶ The truth is also that "the foreign policy of a state is a reflection of the domestic political structures of the state," thus for several decades, the United States perceived Africa mostly as a land of exploitation.¹⁷ Currently it is changing, but still the main purpose of American interest in the continents' issues are to either sustain some resource needs or expand the sphere of influence, both things deriving from the requirements of national strategy of the U.S. Therefore, the Obama administration also seems to concentrate primarily on domestic problems of Americans and the U.S. wars abroad. African problems remain much lower on the agenda of U.S. foreign policy.

¹³ Chinua Ake, "Obama Administration and Africa: Great expectations, practical realities," *World press.org*, January 21, 2009, <http://www.worldpress.org/Africa/3295.cfm> (accessed February 18, 2010).

¹⁴ Horace Campbell, "Obama and US policy towards Africa," *Pambazuka News*, January 15, 2009, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/415> (accessed 15 January 2009).

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Ake, "Obama's Administration and Africa: Great expectations, practical realities"...

¹⁷ Campbell, "Obama and US policy towards Africa"...

America's offers to African countries

During his first visit on the African continent as the U.S. President, Barack Obama delivered a significant and audacious speech in Accra, Ghana. He expressed the understanding of U.S.-Africa connections and mutual dependence in such areas as health, security and prosperity, and described "Africa as a fundamental part of our interconnected world (...) and partners with America." Obama stated also that the U.S.-Africa partnership should be based on "mutual responsibility and mutual respect" and lead to "building the capacity for transformational partnership." As the main areas crucial to Africa's future Obama enumerated: "democracy, opportunity, health, and peaceful resolution of conflict." Moreover, the U.S. President underlined the continuity of certain conditions for acquiring American assistance: "what America will do is increase assistance for responsible individuals and responsible institutions, with a focus on supporting good governance – on parliaments, which check abuses of power and ensure that opposition voices are heard (...); on the rule of law, which ensures the equal administration of justice; on civic participation, so that young people get involved; and on concrete solutions to corruption."¹⁸ Apparently, this statement contains the main assumptions of American support for democratic transformation in Africa, which sends clear message that no maltreatments in any African country should be accepted. Furthermore, Obama reminded the Africans that their opportunities and their future must derive from their own decisions, hopes and actions.¹⁹

The Obama's message was repeated by Secretary Clinton during her visit to the African countries in August 2009. She used the phrase "a message of tough love" and underlined that America is not capable of solving internal problems of Africans, that the condition of their states is the result of their own activities and decisions. At the same time Clinton also assured that the U.S. wants to assist African countries in all their endeavors to challenge the problems and realize their aspirations.²⁰ But, in Manji's view, the visit of the U.S. Secretary of State in Africa had different reverberation – promotion of the African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA), search for oil and natural resources, and supporting security initiatives, all of which are the US corporate interests. The African Growth and Opportunity Act is of more benefit for American corporations than African workforce. This could have been clearly seen in Clinton's visit to Angola and Nigeria, the main providers of oil to the U.S. As for the security issues, the expanding of AFRICOM's presence in Africa is to serve American strategic interests, not the African ones.²¹

¹⁸ Barack Obama, "A new moment of promise in Africa," *Remarks at Accra International Conference Center*, Accra, Ghana, July 11, 2009, http://www.whitehouse.gov/the_press_office/Remarks-by-the-President-to-the-Ghanaian-Parliament (accessed August 30, 2009).

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ "Clinton sets 'tough love' tone in Africa," *China Daily* [Internet], 17 August 2009, http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/world/2009-08/17/content_8577040.htm (accessed October 25, 2009).

²¹ Firoze Manji, "Clinton in Africa: promoting US corporate interests," *Pambazuka News* 445: Clinton, Africa and US corporate interests, 2009, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/445> (accessed February 18, 2010).

In 2010, the main points of Obama's address in Accra (2009) were highlighted again at the conference on sub-Saharan Africa. Secretary Clinton reminded that President Obama's message during his trip to Africa was that America wishes to build, together with African countries, "a relationship not based on patronage, but on partnership." Clinton outlined main priorities of the U.S. commitment in Africa, such as fighting corruption, expanding health programs (additional \$63 billion over five years granted by the Obama administration), mitigating conflicts by active participation in UN and African Union peacekeeping operations, and promoting responsible use of natural resources (the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative).²²

Some commentators did not approve Obama's administration's attitude towards Africa, especially the claim about Africa being the main generator of its own conundrums. The outline of Obama's 'vision' for Africa was simply a repetition of "the familiar clichés manufactured by Western imperialist ideology and mainstream media about Africa."²³ In addition, there were more condemning statements than talking about real structural obstacles to Africa's development which are mostly the outcome of Western domination and interference in African internal issues. All this makes Obama's message similar to the typical statements of the International Monetary Fund's and the World Bank's neoliberal advice to Africa.²⁴ The reality is that Africans have been taking responsibility for their fate since the end of colonialism, but many of their efforts were hindered by the U.S. actions. For instance, American administration for a long time supported Congo's dictator, Mobuto Sese Seko, the U.S. also did nothing to stop genocide in Rwanda. Obama talking about "partnership... grounded in mutual responsibility" should guarantee that the U.S. takes the real responsibility too.²⁵ To some extent the U.S. message of "tough love" might be understood as a beginning of a new, hard line of U.S. strategy.²⁶

The African opinions, the views by former politicians or journalists, on the new U.S. policy toward Africa were diverse, as reported by Mensah and Smith. According to some people the outline of the new U.S. policy to Africa was simply the continuation of Bush policy and further serves business interests, but others underlined the importance of morality's return into American politics. Richard Joseph, a former Obama's advisor on African issues, was of the opinion that Obama's speech in Ghana, together with his statement in Cairo in June 2009, were the starting

²² Clinton, "Diplomacy briefing series: Conference on sub-Saharan Africa," Washington D.C., June 14, 2010, <http://www.state.gov/secretary/rm/2010/06/143134.htm> (accessed July 14, 2010).

²³ Demba Moussa Dembele, "Obama: defending the 'interest of empire,'" *Pambazuka News* 466: Obama one year on: Dashed hopes?, 2010, <http://www.pambazuka.org/en/issue/466> (accessed February 20, 2010).

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Mukoma Wa Ngugi, "Obama to Africa: tough love or tough luck?," *Foreign Policy In Focus*, July 22, 2009, http://www.fpif.org/articles/obama_to_africa_tough_love_or_toughLuck (accessed January 10, 2010).

²⁶ Dew Hinshaw, "Africans reflect on Obama's 'tough love' message," *The Christian Science Monitor*, 12 July 2009, <http://www.csmonitor.com/World/Africa/2009/0712/p06s04-woaf.html>, accessed January 28, 2010.

points of a new doctrine of “pragmatic progressivism.” And the core priorities of this doctrine will be “tolerance, transparency and government that rests on consent rather than coercion.”²⁷

Priorities of Obama's Africa policy

The evolving U.S. strategy towards African countries addresses the main interests of the United States as a global power, needs of Americans and businesses of American companies. At the same time, the U.S. President promises that American activity on the African continent will attempt to support Africa's endeavor to fully integrate with the international economic community, as well as any democratization initiatives.

In May 2010, the White House issued a new version of the *National Security Strategy*. As far as the U.S. interests in Africa are concerned, the U.S. administration promises to “initiate long-term investments that recognize and reward governments that demonstrate the capacity and political will to pursue sustainable development strategies,” particularly in African countries. America also assures that it will work with other global partners to address the challenges on the African continent, such as: the global warming, epidemic disease and agricultural productivity to strengthen food security.²⁸ In the *National Security Strategy*, there is also a passage about Africa – U.S. cooperation:

“The diversity and complexity of the African continent offer the United States opportunities and challenges. As African states grow their economies and strengthen their democratic institutions and governance, America will continue to embrace effective partnerships. Our economic, security, and political cooperation will be consultative and encompass global, regional, and national priorities including access to open markets, conflict prevention, global peacekeeping, counterterrorism, and the protection of vital carbon sinks. The Administration will refocus its priorities on strategic interventions that can promote job creation and economic growth; combat corruption while strengthening good governance and accountability; responsibly improve the capacity of African security and rule of law sectors; and work through diplomatic dialogue to mitigate local and regional tensions before they become crises. We will also reinforce sustainable stability in key states like Nigeria and Kenya that are essential subregional linchpins.”²⁹

Worth noticing is the line about “strategic intervention,” which allows to presuppose that American administrations wishes to concentrate on enhancing internal situation

²⁷ Kwabena Mensah, Patrick Smith, “Obama in Ghana: The world is what you make of it,” *The Africa Report*, 27 July 2009, <http://www.theafricareport.com/archives2/frontlines/3279093-obama-in-ghana-the-world-is-what-you-make-of-it.html> (accessed February 10, 2010).

²⁸ The White House, *The national security strategy* (Washington, D.C.: The White House, May 2010), 34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 45.

in African countries. The U.S. promises in this that it will support African endeavors to achieve economic growth and African actions towards general development.

Philip Carter distinguished four priorities in U.S. relations with African states: security assistance to strengthen peace on the African continent, promotion of democracy, support for sustainable economic growth and promotion of health and social development.³⁰ In accordance, the key pillars of Obama's Africa doctrine are based on some assumptions. Firstly, that Africa will take charge of its development and African leaders and governments will become the initiators of their own development projects. Secondly, the Obama administration will not hesitate to speak to African leaders and governments about the importance of good governance, the rule of law and population-based democracy. The U.S. also promises to develop partnership with African countries in the field of trade, energy, agriculture and health. And finally, Obama administration emphasizes the importance of young Africans' future as in their hands will lay Africa's renaissance.³¹

Obama's visit to Ghana in 2009 was crafted to underline significance of good governance in the process of development. But, underneath, there was another objective – to promote the U.S. interests in an oil-rich region with the hope that Ghana may accept the idea of AFRICOM's base on its territory. The fact is that the Obama administration did not abandon the Bush's military policy in Africa.³² Despite expectations that President Obama could change "the militarized and unilateral national security policy toward Africa," nothing of that happened. Instead, the expenditures on U.S. military programs in Africa were raised in 2010. More funds flew to such programs as the Foreign Military Financing Program (arms sales to African countries), the International Military Education and Training Program (training of African military officers in America), the Trans-Saharan Counter-Terrorism Partnership and the East African Regional Strategic Initiative (training and equipment to African military forces), the International Narcotics Control and Law Enforcement Program, military training programs supporting peace agreements (in Sudan, Liberia and the Democratic Republic of Congo), the African Contingency Operations and Training Assistance Program and several anti-terrorism programs. The increase in funding could be noticed also in the case of the African Command (AFRICOM) and the Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa (CJTF-HOA).³³

The continuation of the U.S. military engagement in Africa by the Obama administration is visible also in other activities. One of them was Secretary Clinton's offer, made to Nigeria in 2009, of the U.S. government's assistance to peace and stability

³⁰ Phillip Carter, *U.S. Policy in Africa in the 21st Century* (Washington, D.C.: The Africa Center for Strategic Studies, 9 February 2009), <http://www.state.gov/p/af/rls/rm/2009/117326.htm> (accessed October 20, 2009).

³¹ Chinua Akukwe, "The Emerging Obama Doctrine on Africa," *Worpress.org*, 29 September 2009, <http://www.worldpress.org/Africa/3427.cfm> (accessed February 18, 2010).

³² Dembele, "Obama: defending the 'interest of empire'..."

³³ Daniel Volman, "Obama's national security policy towards Africa: the first year," *Pambazuka News*: 466, 20 January 2010, <http://pambazuka.org/en/category/features/61614> (accessed May 10, 2010).

actions in the Niger Delta. The second one is a decision to continue U.S. military involvement in Somalia and attacks against purported al Qaeda initiatives there, and a new program of indirect military support for the Transitional Federal Government (TFG) of Somalia which is only in partial control of the country. Apart from that, the Obama administration directed its security assistance package to Mali (mostly providing military equipment and trainings). It is known as a 'Counter Terrorism Train and Equip' (CTTE) program. The incentives for Obama's further extension of Bush's military engagement on the African continent derive from America's addiction to oil and the belief in threat of al Qaeda and other Islamists' terrorists' attacks.³⁴

Conclusion

At this stage of development of the U.S. Africa policy, two years after President Obama took over his office, it is extremely difficult to predict whether the emerging American doctrine towards Africa will bring any realization of Africans' expectations.

So far, there is rather little change in the U.S. policy towards African countries, apart from the change in rhetoric statements. The new tone of American remarks and advisory policy concerning Sub-Saharan Africa is based on the assumption that Africans should recognize their own flawed undertakings in different aspects of political, economic and social issues. Yet, despite the promise of treating Africa as a partner, Obama's administration seems to be further using a preaching tone, some would say that even a patronizing tone. And it becomes evident that African leaders and also African people do not approve this attitude. They slowly turn towards new partners and establish cooperation with these countries that do not enforce any direct conditions or at least do not present a list of Africa's 'must-do things.'

Obama administration seems to be continuing Bush's main assumptions for the U.S. Africa policy. The differences are barely noticeable, especially from the point of view of average people. Therefore, the evolving Obama's doctrine toward Africa, either called 'tough love' or 'pragmatic progressivism', does not meet African expectations. The most disappointing is the lack of change in the U.S. security policy on the African continent. The Obama administration seems to maintain and even expand the old militarized style in Africa, justifying it by still existing threat from terrorists or other dangers that can occur in weak and fragile states. The question is whether President Obama and his equip will remain also as popular among Africans as President Bush was? And whether they will repeat Bush's success in at least developmental aid and health assistance, as well as educational programs? Time will show if America stays among main partners to African countries and its dominant developmental supporters.

³⁴ Volman, "Obama's national security policy towards Africa: the first year"...

The other thing is that probably the fact that Barack Obama became the President of the United States met with overly enthusiastic reaction of the Africans contributed to exaggerated expectations. Africans should remember that Obama was chosen by Americans to realize the interests of the United States, not African countries' needs. American foreign policy has been always based on realistic visions and characterized by pragmatic approach, with slight changes from one presidency to another one. The same way of policy is apparent for Obama administration; first and foremost are American strategic interests and the security of Americans. But, what should be expected from Obama administration is that after dealing with domestic problems, America should reconsider its strategy to the African continent.

As for China's growing engagement on the continent, it appears that now it is China's time and although Obama's leadership is welcomed in Africa, China has potential and willingness to expand its interdependence with the African countries. The U.S. should rather concentrate on cooperation with China than counterbalancing actions. The fact is that in many cases China is present in Africa in these places where Americans do not wish to be.

As far as Africa and its interest are concerned, it should be said that there is no need of choice between Obama's 'tough love' and Chinese 'unconditional' investments. Instead African states should acquire as much as possible from both powers and attempt to apply it to their own needs and purposes. However, for the democratic part of the world it is crucial that Africa stays on the track of democratization and strive to introduce better human rights policies.

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